

PAF NEWS

A bi-monthly newsletter for the Friends of the Polperro Arts Foundation



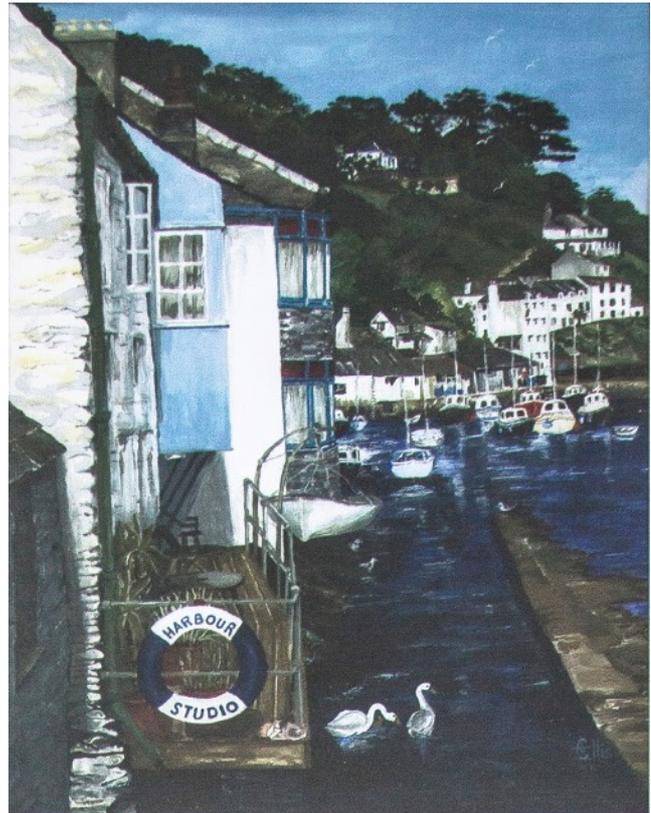
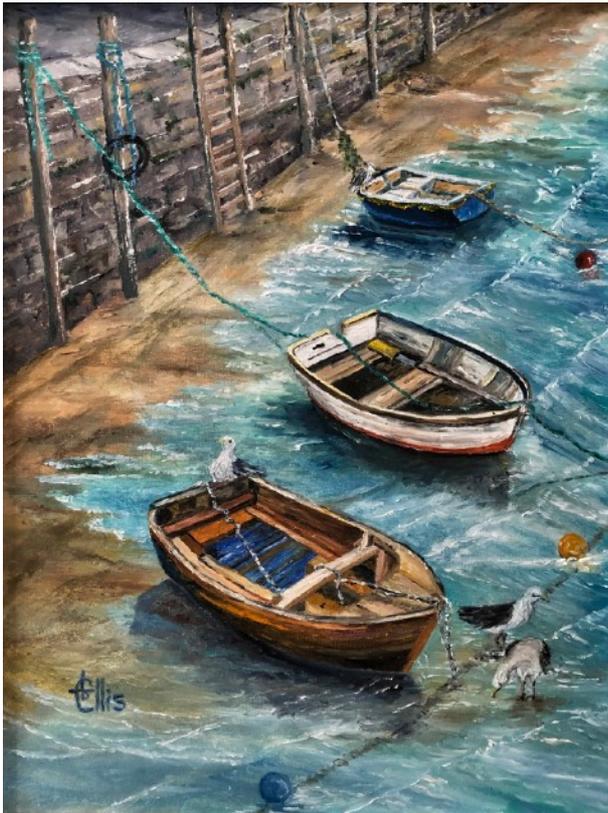
Welcome to our Christmas edition of the newsletter, which comes with very best wishes for a holiday season that will likely be very different from usual for most of us, and with a few images that we hope will lift everyone's spirits. At the time of writing many of Polperro's usual Christmas lights are appearing around the harbour, Big Green and other parts of the village and Santa is already in his place in the village hall porch. And in the gallery our new lighting system is in place. Come and see us!

Barbara Ellis

After art school Barbara's career lay in the world of engineering, but since resuming serious painting some 15 years ago she has developed a range of interesting and distinctive styles. Much of her work is inspired by her rural and coastal surroundings in southeast Cornwall, illustrated here by her views of the harbour, 'Turning tide' and 'View from Roman Bridge' and her two most recent pieces showing three wooden rowing boats at their moorings attended by three of Barbara's trademark gulls; and more gulls playing in the breaking waves.



Barbara also enjoys painting animals, both domestic and exotic. "I like adding humour to animal portraits showing their individual characters," she says. Her commissioned work 'British bulldogs - Donald, Daisy and Denis' is one of many examples. If you would like a painting of your pet, with or without an amusing twist, Barbara will be happy to oblige.



From the history books

For several years the art historian David Tovey has been researching the remarkable history of Polperro as the centre of an artistic community. Here, David continues from his last article with an introduction to Herbert Butler, the father of Polperro art, including an insightful and, of course, still valid comment on the people of Polperro:



Youth and age

“Herbert Edward Butler (1861-1931) is generally referred to as the father of Polperro art as he was the one long-term resident artist in the village - from 1900 to his death in 1931, with his connection with Polperro having started in 1884. Accordingly, it is appropriate that he should be well represented at the 2021 Falmouth exhibition of Polperro art [see below for details], by a significant oil painting and a number of examples of his watercolours and impressive pencil drawings.

Butler first visited Polperro in 1884 with his art school friend, Charles Boutwood, staying in Kayne Cottage, Talland Hill, which they rented from Captain John Pond. During this visit they became friendly with the Pond family and returned with some regularity during the 1880s, leading to Charles marrying Thirza Pond in 1889 and Herbert marrying Sophie Pond in 1892. Butler’s first, and very well received, Royal Academy exhibit was *Hauling in the Pilchard Nets* (1887), which fetched £40,000 when sold earlier this century. The exhibition hopes to feature Butler’s largest ever work (153 x 230 cms), *Youth and Age*, painted in 1889, which depicts a young girl dancing to an elderly fiddler by ‘The Jew’s House’ in Lansallos Street, watched by a well-dressed crowd, and it may well depict festivities on St Peter’s Day.

After a short spell in Chicago, where the Boutwoods had settled, Butler spent the rest of the 1890s doing commercial work in Watford, where he appears to have fraternised with students at the

Herkomer School at Bushey, where much emphasis was placed on pencil drawing. In 1900, he and Sophie settled with their family - they ended up having six children - in Polperro, and whilst Butler continued to produce large oils of the fisherfolk, in which Captain Pond was often a principal model, he is perhaps best known for his watercolours of the harbours and streets of Polperro, painted in all seasons and at all times of day. However, he had a particular penchant for painting twilight, dusk and moonlit scenes, in which the subdued light hid modern 'improvements' and reduced the temptation to include unnecessary detail. In 1906, he combined with Arthur Romilly Fedden, a friend from Bushey, to open a painting school, albeit Fedden was only involved briefly, and this drew down art students to the village, who enjoyed the family lifestyle at his home, 'The Orchard'. Accounts by his daughter, Nancy, of her childhood recall idyllic times.



Service of dedication at the Polperro War Memorial

In 1910, Butler penned a fascinating article on Polperro for the *Art Journal*, which is a unique account of artistic life in the village. He illustrated this with a series of superb pencil drawings. In this he passed the comment,

Surely all visitors to Polperro will agree with the opinion of one long familiar with them, that more fascinating people than our Cornish fisherfolk are not to be found anywhere. Their very faults are amiable. Physically, they compare favourably with any people in England. The universal comment of the stranger in the village is 'What a good-looking lot of people you have here.' The children, too, are very beautiful. Hard times write their sad story on some of our women's faces, but their good looks are, or have been, there, and the artist finds many a fine model amongst them.

Examples of his pencil drawings, retained by his family, will be included in the exhibition, including a superb rendition of the service of dedication of the Polperro War Memorial. Apparently the original painting of this scene was once held by the Rowett Institute but was one of the works sold off. [If you



Sunset conversation

know where any of these disposed of paintings are, please let me know - toveyd53@gmail.com]

Towards the end of his career, Butler seems to have developed a new watercolour technique, which was very novel. It involves the application of paint to give a stippled effect, which was great at evoking the texture of the walls of ancient buildings, but he also used it to provide directional impulse in seas and skies. These works deserve greater recognition.

Butler was said to be hopelessly uncommercial and so did not enjoy as much success as he might

have done, but he enjoyed his idyllic surroundings, which never failed to inspire his brush, in the midst of a large family, for two of his sisters retired to Polperro as well. His obituary makes it clear that he did a huge amount in the community, where his sage advice was always welcomed."

David is writing a two-volume book on the history of art in Polperro up to 1960, and is arranging an exhibition, 'Polperro - Cornwall's Forgotten Art Centre,' that will run at the Falmouth Art Gallery from 28th March to 12th June 2021. In the next issue of our newsletter we will preview the Falmouth exhibition with a taste of David's collection of more than 60 historic paintings of Polperro. Meanwhile work continues on restoring William Mouat Loudan's 1888 painting 'Fish sale, Polperro' which will be one of the main features of the exhibition. More information, including details of how to contribute to the restoration fund, is available on David Tovey's website [here](#).

About the Foundation

The Foundation was set up in 2001 to support and promote local established and aspiring artists and to increase awareness of locally-produced art and the long history of art in Polperro.

Our Team

Currently we have eight exhibiting members all of whom live and work locally: **Barbara Ellis**, artist; **Sandy Horton**, glass; **Paul Lightfoot**, photographer, writer; **Sue Lord**, artist; **Charles Summers**, artist and fan-maker; **Babs Taylor**, artist; **Tracy Watts**, graphic designer and illustrator; and **Lisa Woollett**, author and photographer. **Jacky Humby** is our secretary.

What we offer

- We **exhibit** an extensive, evolving collection of local art works in our gallery in the Polperro village hall.
- We arrange and host occasional **events** for the benefit of local residents and visitors.
- We circulate this free **newsletter** six times each year; email us to suggest others who might like a copy.
- We offer freely-available examples of our work as [screen-savers](#), [desktop wallpaper](#) and in other formats to bring a taste of Polperro and its art to your home computers, tablets and phones.

Support us

Renting, insuring and maintaining the gallery is expensive and we need your support. Please click [here](#) to make a donation through [PayPal](#), visit our website at the link below for other options or let us know if you would like to join us as an artist, Friend or volunteer. Thank you for any help you can give!

Contact us

We will remain open until Sunday 3rd January, normally every day from 11am till 4pm. Please drop in, or contact us by email [<polperroarts@gmail.com>](mailto:polperroarts@gmail.com) or through our website: [<www.polperroarts.org>](http://www.polperroarts.org)

